DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 396 445 EA 027 689

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TITLE Moving the Focus to Children: Four Female Superintendents Look at Their First Three Years.
PUB DATE Apr 96
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, NY, April 8-12, 1996).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Boards of Education; Career Development; Elementary Secondary Education; Females; Interprofessional Relationship; Leadership; *Leadership Styles; Orientation; *Quality of Working Life; *Superintendents; *Women Administrators
IDENTIFIERS *Beginning Superintendents

ABSTRACT

A review of literature indicates that relations between entry-level, female superintendents and school boards have been problematic. This paper presents findings of a study that identified the major issues faced by four female entry-level superintendents, how they handled these situations, and the strategies they used during their first year as superintendents. Data were obtained through two group interviews--the first at the end of the superintendents' first year on the job and the second after 30 months. After nearly 3 years in the superintendency, the women's conversation revolved around the following prominent issues: the importance of providing information and training to the board; finding a balance between work and personal life; job seeking advice; maintaining open communications and interactive leadership styles; and handling gender differences (for example, not asking for or knowing about "perks" that their male counterparts routinely request and receive). (Contains 40 references.) (LMI)

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Moving the Focus to Children: Four Female Superintendents Look at Their First Three Years

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Paper presented at the
American Educational Research Association
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April 8, 1996

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Moving the Focus to Children:
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Theoretical Framework and Purpose

The percentage of school superintendents who are women has been merely creeping up at a very slow pace, in spite of affirmative action efforts including the passage of Title IX in 1972 and the Glass Ceiling Act of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. This continues to be puzzling since by 1990, women earned 59% of the master's degrees and 51% of the doctoral degrees in educational administration (Snyder, 1993). During the years from 1970 to 1980 less than 1% of the superintendents in Pennsylvania were women. In 1985 (Pavan) only 18 (3.6 %) of the Pennsylvania superintendents were women, a figure slightly larger than the national level (Shakeshaft, 1989). National data complied by Glass (1992), which includes K-8 districts that are not found in Pennsylvania, determined that 6.4 % of the superintendents were women while in Pennsylvania, 28 women held this role or 5.6% of the positions (Pavan, Winkler, & Dovey, 1995.) This number was increased to 34 (6.8%) in the 1993-94 year when the women studied here assumed the role of superintendent. As the result of a retirement incentive bill and (one hopes) a changed public attitude, there were 50 female superintendents in Pennsylvania in the 1994-1995 school year, an astounding jump to 10 %. As delightful as this change is to contemplate, there exists in this state a sufficient number of certified and experienced women to more than double this number. The lack of female school administrators cannot be blamed on the women's unwillingness to get the needed credentials or to make extensive job search efforts (Pavan, 1988b, 1989.)

Tallerico and Burstyn (1994) gleaned from Glass's 1992 study of the superintendency that women are found in higher proportions in very small, rural districts with fewer than 300 students. In such small districts, the superintendent wears many hats and has no other administrator to delegate the myriad of tasks. Relations with the school board and the community are very close, leading to very high levels of stress for the superintendent and to a short tenure for the incumbent superintendent. They conclude that these "starter districts" are very unfavorable places for women to begin their superintendency and that search consultants should sponsor women for more favorable contexts.

As the result of her election campaign of "Children First", a former Peace Corps member moved directly from the classroom to her first superintendency in a poor district with 13,000 students. Curcio (1994) documented the time needed to build relationships before this idealistic superintendent could effect change in the district. Scherr's (1994) case studies of two entry level female superintendents found both the outsider and the insider spending the majority of their time building relations, but the insider could more comfortably delegate communication responsibilities to her deputies. Only the outsider noted gender as a barrier, but the insider worked in a district where 50% of the principals and of her cabinet were women.

Four (two men and two women) superintendents were followed by four different researchers during their first year in office. Keedy (1995) noted that all four had agendas which focused on improving services for children, but only three utilized strategies that board members perceived as a good fit with district needs. Even with 7-2 school board support after her work to get the school bond issue passed, the superintendent named Kathleen Connors decided to resign as her social change agenda did not fit the context of the stable community which she headed. Additionally Bogotch (1995) reports that even in a district with 60,000 students she had no deputy,

assistant or even a full-time secretary so that she had no one to do the needed work.

The purpose of this study was to determine the major issues faced by four female entry level superintendents, how they handled these situations, and the strategies they used in their first year as superintendents. Since these women have different personal characteristics and work in quite different districts, it had been expected that their experiences might be quite different. An initial meeting was held a little more than a year into the superintendencies of these women. Because of the passage of time and the desires of the participants, the women met again to review their experiences about 30 months into their superintendencies.

Data Source and Methods

During the summer and fall of the 1993 school year, four women who completed their doctorates with me as their advisor, began their first superintendencies. While these woman shared a common doctoral program, they rarely shared classes so that even their educational experience was not totally similar. They assumed their first superintendency in the same state and during the same year. The individual backgrounds of the individuals and their school districts have both similarities and differences as noted below. After their first year had concluded; we met together as a group so that they could explore these experiences. These women had known me since the beginning of their doctoral study (one for almost 20 years) and they had kept in close contact often using me as a sounding board for job related issues. Two of the women had worked in the same school district and knew each other quite well. The trust level was very high due to their relationship with me over the years. This meant that much more could be accomplished in a four hour interview than would be possible if no such relationship existed. Additionally, I am able to call each woman at any time to clarify their viewpoints.

The interview was structured by a number of questions posed by the interviewer, but these were augmented by the responses given. Obviously the order of the questions was also altered to enable the dialogue to flow in a more naturalistic way and therefore, allow time to develop thoughtful responses. Unlike previous research, this is not a series of individual interviews; but a sharing of experiences among this group. Listening to the others triggered remembrances that might not otherwise have been uncovered. Commonalities and differences became readily apparent as they talked together. In fact, at times the discussion became a problem solving session where the women traded experiences and helped each other determine strategies for action. The women were open and supportive of each other, yet would present differing opinions reflective of their individual beliefs. They seemed to prefer the group format over the individual interview format because it enabled them to learn from hearing the experiences, strategies, and rationales of the other superintendents.

The entire conversation was audio tape recorded and then transcribed to be available for further analysis. The resulting single spaced transcript is 63 pages long. It was then the task of the researcher to find those threads which were common to all the participants and those which were unique to only one of the superintendents. With the exception of district documents given to me by the participants, non solicited comments from school administrators whom I encountered for other reasons, and newspaper articles; this research is based on the self reports of these superintendents. Concern as to the validity of their remarks might be held except for the way in which they were using this interview time to resolve their own issues. The fact that time was not needed for the interviewer to gain the trust of the participants because these women knew her integrity is a major factor in the study. Actually, the session had been

presented to them as an opportunity to interact with other female superintendents in similar circumstances. In any case, these perceptions present the reality as they experienced it.

A second session was held about 30 months into their superintendencies. This was after a paper had been prepared (Pavan, 1995) utilizing data from the initial meeting about their first year. Once again the session was audio tape recorded and a notated script was made. A last minute family emergency prevented one of the women from attending this second session. She listened to the recorded tape and taped her comments for the researcher to include in the analysis. In fact, even though it was difficult to schedule the sessions, after both sessions the woman asked when they would meet again. Additionally, they had talked to each other by phone and I had spoken individually with each one of them. Note that this research is also providing a vehicle for support, information seeking, and self analysis.

The Women and their Districts

Dr. Richardson '80 while the youngest of the group in her mid-forties, received her doctorate first. Her career path through six districts, unlike the other women and most men (Pavan & McKee, 1988), was directly from staff positions to line positions with titles including the word superintendent. She is white, her husband is a physician, they have two school-age children and the family resides in a different school district. She is employed in a rural district with 3300 students in five schools which is experiencing rapid growth and becoming a suburban district. She told the board before being hired that her strengths were in personnel, staff development, curriculum and instruction, not in finance and construction. Dr. Richardson found that the board went along completely (9-0 beginning contract vote) with her hiring "wish list" and continues to work cooperatively with her as long as she provides them the

data and rationale for a given decision and she focuses on a solid educational program. At her appointment she was the only female superintendent in her county, but now there are four women. Her beginning contract was for a five year period. The budget process was her first major hurdle and demanded much time and energy.

Dr. Manning '87 spent most of her career in the largest district in the state, but left to become assistant superintendent of a small urban school district and now leads another larger (7500 students in 11 schools), urban school district with a mostly minority student enrollment. She was the first female appointed to this position in her county and while there were three women superintendents for a time, one has returned to the city as associate superintendent. Her beginning contract was for a three year period resulting from a 7-2 board vote which was protested by some community members due to lack of community input into the selection process. This school district has been in the newspapers for the past few years due to its political problems both in the school district and the city in which it is located, very low student achievement, and violence in the schools including more than 300 arrests in the high school during the year preceding her appointment. She accepted this challenging position even after being discouraged by fellow educators saying, " My whole professional career has been based on having an impact on what happens in the lives of children" and she believed that she could make a difference. In her early fifties, she is an African-American, single parent with a daughter in graduate school and has a partner. She maintains an apartment in the district where she stays during the week.

Dr. Reid '89 spent all her career in the largest district in the state and left the deputy superintendent position when she was wooed by a suburban district with 6,300 students in 9 schools to become the first female, African-American superintendent in that county. Two other women superintendents have since been hired in her county. Her previous central office instructional responsibilities did not have such close

interaction with a school board. She is in her mid-fifties. Her son is grown and her husband is a teacher in New Jersey. She had an elaborate entry plan beginning with a document describing her activities for the first four months which brought her into every school so that she could early on interact with teachers and influence the curriculum and instruction of the school district. The result was a report on the district in January from which a strategic plan was built and superintendent goals were devised. She has not moved into the district. Her beginning contract for a four year period was the result of a 7-2 board vote, but there have been major changes in the board with the 1995 election.

Dr. Dovey '94, who actually completed her dissertation in the early months of her superintendency by interviewing female school superintendents in the state, is married to a retired school superintendent. Their residency is outside her district. They have four children and also grandchildren. She is white, in her mid-fifties and is the only one of the group who was not an oldest child. After six years as an assistant superintendent and one as an acting superintendent in two different districts, she obtained this superintendency to become the second woman superintendent in the county. She accepted this position despite rumors that school board members were difficult to work with because the school staff was caring, worked well together and this position enabled her to return home each evening Her beginning contract was for a three year period with a board vote of 9-0. After the fall 1995 election the board changed so that seven of the nine members represented an economy-minded tax payers group. Her rural district has just over 2,000 students in 3 schools. Although ten times larger than the "starter" districts mentioned by Tallerico and Burstyn (1994), it is the smallest district in this group.

The First Year

Each woman is driven by her educational vision for her school district. Their rallying cry is, "What is best for students ?" This differs as the districts and the women differ, but all focus on the learning of their students. That each woman values and feels personally responsible for the cognitive and social learning experience of each individual child dominated the discussion. Dr. Manning talked about receiving pictures and notes from some of her youngest students after their playground had been paved. Each superintendent makes administrative visibility in the schools for either themselves or their administrators a priority.

Multicultural education was seen not solely as a racial issue, but also one of class, gender, and religion that should result in mutual respect for differences. A 20 year old case of sexual harassment by a teacher which just surfaced in the media was immediately investigated by the superintendent and resulted in the proclamation of the school board policy publicly read at the next school board meeting. This pro-active stance as opposed to the covering-up activities of previous male superintendents was common to the women.

A lot of time is spent listening to others including various groups such as service support people (bus drivers, for example) in such a way that open communication could take place. Dr. Reid spoke directly of modeling behavior and all the women were engaged in showing their administrative staff that confrontation or dictatorial directives were generally ineffective communication tools.

They went through routines such as the budget process following past practice all the while studying it in order to make revisions for the next year. In the case of the budget, each one was going to make it a more open process with more information available to more people earlier in the year.

They know that the performance that gets monitored is what is done so Dr. Richardson tracks that principals observe teachers in their classrooms before writing summative teacher evaluations. Now that the need for quantity is understood, she is going to work on the quality of their classroom observations.

The superintendents talked to the media to give them their side of the story hoping that the press would be more positive than negative, although they realized that good news doesn't make news. Dr. Reid writes a local newspaper column which provides a forum for her viewpoint and an opportunity to educate the public. Even Dr. Manning was able to have many positive articles about various school improvement projects in the daily press along with reports of long standing district problems.

The biggest surprise these women had was the positive feedback that they received for being in the schools and available. This amused them as they assumed that was an essential part of their job, to know what was happening in the schools.

Because all four women entered a new school district as superintendent and none have full-time residency in their districts, they are outsiders. They generally attend meetings or functions within the district three or four nights per week which often means fourteen hour work days and try to maintain the weekend as personal or family time. Even with supportive spouses, female superintendents spend more time taking care of household chores than do male superintendents (Pavan, 1987b) so their work week is considerably longer.

Each entered with an elaborate entry plan involving interviews with many people both in and outside of the schools to learn about the district. The entry strategies used by the women were remarkedly similar even to the point of having been influenced by the same book (Jentz and others, 1982). Everyone had a well defined entry plan in order to collect information and to start data recording processes if not already available in their district. Having a process for studying their new school

district as all were outsiders, enabled the women to indicate during the early months that they could not deyermine precise goals for the district until this process was completed and then a goal oriented plan would be forthcoming based on input from all stakeholders. This process went fairly smoothly in most districts except the large urban district where crisis events such as a drive-by shooting would need immediate responses about children's safety rather than a very measured, "I'm trying to get a complete picture of the district before we develop a strategic plan." One year after Dr. Manning' appointment, the state declared the district financially distressed. The local board was superseded by a state appointed control board, although the local board continued to meet. The next day the teachers who had been working for a year without a contract voted for a strike authorization.

Considerable time was spent by the women discussing staff evaluation and hiring practices with all considering that these efforts would most likely result in improved educational programs for children. The two larger districts had an administrator sole for personnel, one of which was a newly designated position. In the two smaller districts the superintendents personally interviewed all teachers before hiring.

Everyone had previously been an assistant superintendent so were not new to central office responsibilities. However, they were all dismayed that boards gave more consideration to political issues than to what was best for children. Even Dr. Dovey, a superintendent's wife, still did not anticipate the board's politicalness or their lack of respect for the educational level of the person they had hired to be their superintendent. Each clearly understands the financial limitations of the particular community in which they work, but putting politics above children remains discouraging to them. For Dr. Manning, the situation is even more complicated with the addition of a state appointed control board. Considerable time has been spent in

educating the school board members in order to help them understand their responsibility is not only to fiscally conservative taxpayers, but also to the education of the district's children. Both Dr. Manning and Dr. Dovey knew that their boards had long histories of not working well together, but assumed change could be made by a hard working, caring superintendent willing to provide the needed data for policy decision-making.

Even though this was not an interview question much conversation did ensue over the differ ways male and female superintendents handle their jobs. Based on their previous experiences, monthly meetings of the superintendents in four different counties, and the expectations of people in their districts; these woman noted that men seem more likely not to listen, to bury or ignore or cover up problems, and to issue directives rather than involve the appropriate people in problem solving activities. Dr. Reid meets "with the guys" (her administrative cabinet) at the beginning of each week and they started waiting for her to develop an agenda and to issue directives while she wanted this to be a group taking initiative as to the problems and the solutions.

None of the women felt that their spouse or partner was required to be at most of the school or social school board events which they attended. Dr. Dovey had attended many of her superintendent husband's events prior to her own appointment as that was expected. However, her school board doesn't expect her husband to attend. The role of the superintendent's spouse is clearly defined by gender; wives attend, but husbands need not.

All the woman are working incredibly hard and for long hours. While they strive for more balance between their personal life and their professional life, they really had understood that especially for the first few years in a new position this would happen. Most of their partners know that the job is probably number one for the woman as it is for most men. More conflict or guilt can result when there are young children or

grandchildren involved. Yet that vision of what schools should look like and the desire to get to that point drives them to try to do all the things that should be done.

These women, all experienced as assistant superintendents and some also as acting superintendents, upon entering new districts as the superintendent regardless of size or type of district or their own personal characteristics indicated these issues and strategies during their first year:

1. Politics. While dismayed due to the board's emphasis on issues other than children understood the need for attention to other stakeholders. Initial reaction was one of dismay, but quickly recognized the need to deal with it.

2. Planning. Started with a formal entry plan so that study time would be allowed. Provided a written district plan after several months of study with goals on which district activities would focus. Continues to refer to the district plan to justify district and budget activities.

3. Learning / open communication. Interviewed all major stakeholder groups and spent considerable time in the schools. Sought and responded to all forms of communication in an open, honest manner by providing whatever information was needed. Reacted to criticism as if it might be helpful rather than in a defensive manner. Would investigate issues and report rather than try to cover up.

4. Board relations. Worked to train and educate the board as to their responsibilities by providing the needed information in a timely manner. Spent time to orient new board members.

5. Study past practices. Year one was used to study past practices such as the budget process, hiring and evaluation in order to modify for the next year. Also to investigate different procedures for activities such as collective negotiations which are not yearly issues.

6. Changing behavior. Rather than using the directive approach would model desired behavior even pointing out the behavior she was using such as creative problem solving rather than confrontation to education the staff. Set in motion monitoring procedures such as monthly reports to principals on number of teacher observations which each had completed.

7. Personal / work balance. While aware of the importance, most need to continue to protect their personal or family time. Living outside of the district and not being available on weekends are the strategies currently used.

Into the Third Year

A last minute family emergency prevented one superintendent from meeting with the other three women, but she listened to the audio tape and then provided her comments on tape. As with the last meeting, conversations between the women and myself and amongst themselves have continued as has the sharing of newspaper clippings and other articles of interest. Board memberships had changed for each woman since the November election with all boards except one heavily tilting toward representatives from economy minded taxpayer groups or the dominant local political party. Additionally both Dr. Manning and Dr. Dovey had not had their three year contracts renewed. The non-renewal of both male and female superintendents' contracts is quite common here in Pennsylvania in the 1990's as it is nationally (Johnson, 1996). The other contracts were for four and five years and therefore were not up for renewal.

The board president said "the district made advancements during [Dovey's] term . . . accountability, technology . . . she did a lot of good works, but she and the board didn't get along. There was a personality conflict . . . the board and the superintendent don't mesh. Both sides were at fault here. It isn't just Dr. Dovey." He

led the 6-3 vote not to renew. A local editorial began, "Jeers to the . . . School District board for its vote not to renew the contract of Superintendent Dovey. . . . Perhaps a [new] contract of one or two years in length [should be extended] with a focus on trying to bridge the personality gaps that the board currently sees between themselves and Dovey. . . . Down the road, the upheaval of changing superintendents may prove to be as tumultuous as the personality conflicts the board perceives it cannot solve."

The school board did not follow the superintendent evaluation process which had been a verbal agreement in the hiring of Dr. Dovey. While all board members had provided input for her written evaluation in the third year (no written feedback had been given for the first and second years), they did not see the final written report which reflected only the view points of those members who opposed the superintendent. Not only did they not provide the yearly written evaluation as agreed in the hiring process, they also did did not honor salary agreements for a percentage raise and lump sum salary adjustment after the first year saying that "they did not remember" the salary agreement.

Dr. Manning had stressed that there must be a process for hiring that allowed the most qualified person to be selected for the job and that with equal qualifications the local person would be hired. This was not past practice in a district where the board would write a job description, post it, and hire someone while the superintendent was out of town even thought the state school code requires that all candidates be recommended to the board by the superintendent. Because Dr. Manning believes that improvement in children's learning is related to the quality of the staff, she has put enormous effort into changing the job patronage system in the district. In fact the same players move from district to city payrolls and back again. Her contract was not renewed by the local board. The control board agreed as they felt nothing would happen if the local board would not work with the superintendent.

The state representative from the area said that the decision was political. "She has worked to turn the schools around; brought in corporations, hospitals and universities to support education: and put people in place who can work with students. The school board just wants to put someone in place who will be their puppet." The result will be 5 superintendents since 1991 with Dr. Manning being the only to stay more than a year. Since the vote not to renew her contract, she has been put on administrative leave. A new superintendent who had been retired for 14 years was selected, but the community and the federal master for special education protested this selection of someone related to a local politician. He then refused the position which is presently held by the assistant superintendent in an acting capacity and now problems in his previous district have raised questions about his continuance. The chair of the Control Board has resigned to accept a superintendency elsewhere. Several experienced administrators have left for other districts due to the unrest in the district. Once more the district is in turmoil.

Dr. Manning enabled the district to improve, especially in making the high school a clean, safe place for both students and teachers to work. Previously the newspapers had reported great problems with the high school including security personnel who were harassing students. Much work was required to find space for the additional students expected for fall 1995. This required moving some programs into different spaces, moving furniture, and painting a building which had been troubled. Dr. Manning was able to get the teachers' contract resolved without a strike, no small feat in a district strapped for money and unable to raise taxes. Several administrators who were not performing have been demoted so a number of schools lack principals because the local board will not follow a hiring process. Parents and children took over her office one day to display their anger at the "slow" progress being made. While district change appeared slow, there was a total turn around in many areas.

It has not been a picnic for Drs. Richardson and Reid either, although their districts seem "normal" by contrast to the other two. In their third years, they still are out three or four evenings a week and never seem to have enough time; yet the third year is not as exhausting as the first two. With the November 1995 election, all four school boards have changed and individual board members may spend as much as three hours per day with the superintendent in addition to board meetings. Not only is there on-going need for general board orientation sessions and Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) Academy for new members, but each board member needs one-on-one sessions on their particular interests. Extensive training is a must during teacher negotiations so that the board members decide and understand what their appropriate roles are. All four of these women decided not to directly negotiate, but to follow the discussions and be available to talk with their teams as needed. Board members require a great deal of nurturing, even those considered educational advocates, and the members do not seem to realize that time spent with them is time not spent with teachers, students, and administrators.

Dr. Reid, additionally, has put in long hours with district groups including community members working on curriculum and instruction initiatives. She finds that her continued presence is a signal that this effort is truly sanctioned by the superintendent. The positive attitude her teachers hold toward district staff development is probably influenced by her efforts, the district past practice of six year curriculum revision cycles, and the involvement of teachers in staff development planning.

The school boards in the two non renewing districts are and have been contentious ones, having many public and behind the scenes clashes. Board members have personal agendas and finding school district jobs for their constituents are high on this list. Both of these boards had a history of poor working relations within

the boards and with their past superintendents. Board members, especially the presidents, appear to want to be the chief school administrator rather than board members. These people spent long periods of time with the superintendent attempting to dictate to the superintendent exactly what should be done that particular day.

All the superintendents provide extensive information to their board members in packets before meetings and directly to individuals according to their interests with Dr. Richardson due to board request recording a daily message for members to call in and receive. However, the women noted that they could not rely on board members reading even the information which they had requested. So time was spent before board meetings determining strategies for the method of presentation and how much information to present. Especially for the budget discussions the most effective procedure seemed to be to present the "short" version and to be prepared with backup materials on any portions for which there were questions. The timing and placement of various items in the board agenda was carefully determined to facilitate the approval of needed curricular programs. These difficulties were also experienced by an educational researcher (Cooper, 1996) who learned to share research with his fellow school board members differently than he did with the research community so that the board would understand and use educational research.

After some time in the conversation, Dr. Reid noted that children had not been mentioned. She admitted that her first year when she had as one of her objectives visiting schools, she probably spent more time with children. However, they read to first graders, judge spelling bees, join in women's history, and all explain to children that in addition to medical doctors there are different kinds of doctors--those who know about other subjects such as themselves. Yet at this time, providing for children by being able to hire quality personnel using an equitable process (not board members friends), arranging for staff development and curriculum improvement, educating

board members, and taking care of the district's finances (an area none of them felt comfortable with at the beginning) were what consumed their time and dominated this conversation.

After nearly three years in the superintendency, these issues were prominent in the conversation:

1. Nurturing board members. The demands on their time of both the total school board and individual members and especially school board presidents, limits their effectiveness as chief executive officers. The turnover after school board elections requires a continuous effort to train and monitor board members as to their role and their legal responsibilities. Yet to ignore the care and feeding of school board members leads to total disaster.

2. Being a superintendent. The demands of the first two years as superintendent in order to learn about the district are exhausting (you have so little personal life)) and none of the women would really want to go through this period again. In the third year, you can begin to relax and have a more normal life. All love being the superintendent and could point to the positive changes in their school districts which are the result of their efforts. Of the two women whose contracts were not renewed, one is out looking for another position and the other is taking some time to decide.

3. Job seeking advice. Their advice to women seeking their first superintendency is to get a four or five year contract, find a board that works together, be real clear as to your own strengths and weaknesses so the board understands them, and negotiate as strong a contract as possible with all agreements in writing. As a candidate you can learn much about by the board by listening to their questions and you should thoroughly research the district by reading the local paper, calling people, and just asking questions wherever you go.

4. Communications. The superintendent's job is in large part public relations, to interface with the public in an open and honest manner and to get the positive stories told. Both the staff and the public need to realize the progress made. Principals often need to be shown how to do this (talk to everyone at a meeting, get stories in the local paper) and told to do this on the building level.

5. Gender differences. In settings with other superintendents, the women note that they are not unaccepted, but they are not supported as the male superintendents tend to interact with their male buddies. A few board members appear to treat male and female superintendents differently.

6. Trust yourself. Trust your instincts. Ask lots of questions. If it doesn't make sense, there is probably something wrong. Don't assume that the "expert" has the needed expertise.

Discussion

While the women are driven to work extremely long hours as Pavan (1988a) found in her earlier survey of all Pennsylvania female superintendents; their vision of making schools better for children leads them to educate their boards, parents, the general public, and the media in terms of both information and appropriate behavior. Each came armed with an entry plan to gather data, become informed about the district, and to demonstrate an open communication style. This study process proceeded fairly smoothly except in the urban school district which was also the largest and clearly the most distressed. The budget process was their first testing ground and while modest increases were passed, this procedure was substantially changed for the second year by increasing input, public information, and starting earlier. Personnel hiring and evaluation were considered an important use of their time as this would most influence the quality of the instruction. Some board members,

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especially in the larger districts, view hiring as a way to help their constituents and constant vigilance is necessary to preserve a fair process. The superintendents of the smaller districts were quite directly involved in these processes while the women in the larger districts instituted new positions to handle these functions.

Working with the board and individual members requires enormous amounts of time which continued to be necessary, however there is some evidence that the emphasis on data, children's needs, and open communication is being picked up by some board members in this study. Lindle (1990) found board relations provided the largest source of conflict for both the male and female superintendents in her Pennsylvania study, yet Glass (1992) found only 16.7% reported this reason for leaving their last superintendency. In the lead article in a special section on School Boards in the January 1994 issue of the Phi Delta Kappan, Danzberger lists ten problems of school boards among which are these also indicated by the female superintendents in this study: "micromanaging districts"; responding to special interests or political needs; not devolving decision making to the schools; "exhibit serious problems in their capacity to develop positive and productive, lasting relationships with superintendents"; "pay little or not attention to their performance and their need for on-going training"; and respond to the "issue of the day" or maintain the status quo (p.369). The strategies of providing information, training for board members as to appropriate role behavior and process, increasing community involvement, continuing the dialogue between superintendent and the board, keeping the focus on the district strategic plan while maintaining openness and trust which these women were striving to do were noted in the series as necessary for boards to be effective.

In their study of women who left the superintendency, Tallerico, Burstyn, and Poole (1993) indicated that 13 of the 20 left due to non renewal of their contracts. These women reported the following "pushes: political factors": school board

dysfunction, union influence, non-educational focus on funds and facilities, and moral or ethical clashes (often due to board insistence on illegal practices.) While none saw gender as a primary cause they suggested they did not act tough enough, that the board did not feel women should run things or didn't fit "the mold" and that women are held to higher performance standards. Women in this study are in agreement with the political factors yet they did not experience undue difficulty with unions. Except for their own beliefs that their performance exceeded that of most male superintendents, they did not mention gender comparisons on standards of performance as a CEO. Tallerico, Poole, and Burstyn (1994) quote an urban female superintendent whose contract was not renewed who sees that her peers are "quite competent" but she gets tired of catering to school board members who want special favors (p. 443).

Some of the difficulty of dealing with school boards according to Wesson and Grady, (1994) may be that boards are often hiring a superintendent who they expect will both "introduce and manage change" and "provide stability, structure, and organization for a district" (p.14). This national study of women superintendents reported that their respondents like the women in this study were very high on such personal qualities as: "challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart" (Grady and Wesson, 1994, p. 25).

Finding a balance between a personal life and work demands continues to be an issue slowly being resolved with weekends reserved for family. Brunner (1995) notes some characteristics of the 12 female superintendents whom she studied that are shared with the women in this study: a strong sense of efficacy, extremely bright, workaholics, and often more skillful than their male peers with the capacity to improvise as needed (pp. 10-11).

These women all use the "interactive leadership" style as defined by Rosener (1990) in her study of managerial women. They "encourage participation" by involving others using forums such as town meetings, "share power and information" by having administrators decide the cabinet agenda and providing data to all, "enhance the self-worth of others" by insisting that principals who bring them problems also make a recommendation for a solution, and "energize others" by their own enthusiasm when talking about the students. This "power to" approach was noted in Brunner's case (1994) of another female superintendent.

The interactive, open style of these female superintendents is in stark contrast to the 24 male superintendents who Blumberg (1985) reported took a reactive stance to conflict attempting to defuse it quickly and avoid if at all possible. They confided in their wives not other superintendents and their greatest dilemma was when to "use one's chips' as their style was the bargaining or bartering style. Berg's case study (1995) of a young male superintendent is an updated version of this political stance. The differences may not only be in gender as these women noted that some male superintendents new to the job were more likely to be concerned with the students and willing to share. A recent book by Beck (1994) entitled *Reclaiming Educational Administration as a Caring Profession* provides additional evidence that caring may be a quality now more respected in the profession, if not by school boards, in the 1990's.

The female superintendents of western districts studied by Bell and Chase (1989) used bureaucratic policies and hierarchy structure yet involved others in democratic decision making. Because these districts were so small (220 to 2,800 students), the hierarchy would have few layers and these policies might have a more informal character as probably everyone knew each other. The districts in this study were all larger.

Gender differences surfaced as the women discussed provisions that might be used during their contract negotiations. A long list of known perks in male superintendents' contracts was shared including a book allowance, car, credit cards, conference and membership fees, medical insurance both while on the job and until age 65, IRAs or pension plans, additional sick days not to be used but to be paid at the per diem rate, and salary increases "donated" to a district educational foundation but counting as salary for retirement. Even with the knowledge that their male counterparts were receiving such perks; they felt that while they deserved a fair contract, some of these requests were not "fair." As Gilligan (1982) pointed out long ago, boys know the rules and play the game, but girls have a responsibility of caring which, does not allow them to take advantage of the system. If their contracts are second class to men as one of the women mentioned, do school boards look on them as second class superintendents ? Could this willingness to be fair, be part of the reason that some (not the majority) school board members are disrespectful of their female superintendents ? One woman noted that we are so glad that we got these jobs that we aren't able to ask for these contract items.

Men are used to playing the game and women don't know all the rules.

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